Changes coming to classifications, evaluations for AU staff this year

Wrapping up a comprehensive study, the university is in the final stages of implementing changes to its compensation, classification and performance management system for non-faculty employees.

The new program, which applies to Administrative/Professional and University Staff employees, will make job descriptions, job titles, performance appraisals and salary administration more consistent, clear and fair across campus, said Lynne Hammond, AU’s assistant vice president for human resources.

Capping more than two years of development, public input and review, all features of the new system are scheduled to be in place by the end of the current fiscal year on Sept. 30. Approximately 3,000 full-time employees are covered by the new system.

Hammond said no one’s salary will be reduced as a result of the new program. “There will be no immediate impact on salaries,” she said, “but the new system should make it easier for employees and their supervisors to plan for career growth and document accomplishments to justify future merit increases.”

AU began developing a new classification and compensation system for AP and University Staff employees in 2004. Many employees saw the first results of the classification and compensation project in January 2006, when the university implemented a new performance management system for non-faculty employees. The new performance management process places more emphasis on employee involvement in setting goals and encouraging employees to take advantage of opportunities for growth and development. With implementation of the new performance management system, AU converted to a calendar year performance review cycle beginning each January.

Although AU could have significantly reduced the time spent developing the system by limiting campus-wide participation in the process, Hammond said there was a consensus among planners and administrators that involvement by stakeholders was critical to designing a system that is responsive to the needs of the university community, including administration and employees.

“We started the job analysis process by asking all employees to complete a job questionnaire, and we devoted a lot of time to soliciting and incorporating

See Staff classifications, page 2
Burdg to chair area training board

**Upcoming Events**

**Tuesday, January 30**

**BLOOD DRIVE** American Red Cross, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., ballroom, Foy Student Union; also Wednesday

**PUBLIC LECTURE** "Picturing the Unvictorious: The Southern Scene in Alabama, 1930-1946," William Underwood Eiland, Georgia Museum of Art, 4 p.m., Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art

**Wednesday, January 31**

**PUBLIC LECTURE** Leah Rawls Atkins, historian and director emeritus, Center for Arts & Humanities, “Centennial History of Alabama Power Company,” 4 p.m., Special Collections, Draughon Library

**Thursday, February 1**

**COMMITTEE SESSIONS** AU Board of Trustees, sessions start at 10 a.m., Taylor Center, AU

**CIVIL RIGHTS FILM** “February One,” story of the 1960 Greensboro lunch counter sit-ins, 3 p.m., Foy 217

**PUBLIC LECTURE** Harold Franklin, first black student at AU (1964), 5 p.m., Foy 217

**Friday, February 2**

**MEETING** AU Board of Trustees, 9 a.m., Taylor Center, AUM

**SYMPOSIUM** “How People Learn: Research and Application,” Primary speaker Jose Mestre of the Beckman Institute, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 3-5 p.m., 7th floor, ballroom, Foy Student Union; call Biggrock, 844-8530

**Tuesday, February 6**

**FACULTY SEMINAR** “Leischuck Endowed Presidential Teaching Award Recipients Discuss Teaching Excellence,” noon-1:30 p.m., Foy 208; open to all faculty, staff and graduate students; bring your lunch

**PUBLIC LECTURE** “Goddess Mythology and the Third Millennium,” Katharynn Privett of Department of English, 12:30 p.m., Haley 2218

**PUBLIC LECTURE** “New Perspectives: The Cultural Roots of Self-Taught Art in Alabama,” Margaret Lynne Ausfeld of the Montgomery Museum of Art, 4 p.m., Julie Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art

**February 1-6**

**AU REPORT** Editor Roy Summerville. Contributing editors and writers: Katie Wilder and Charles Martin, AU Communications; and Mitch Emerson, AT&AC Photography. Jefferson Eberhardt and Melinda Hamblet, AU, Photographic Services. Executive Director of Communications and Marketing: Donnie Dover.

The AU Report is published by the Office of Communications and Marketing at Auburn University. Issues appear each Monday during fall and spring semesters and every two weeks in summer term, except on the Monday of the Monday after various major U.S. holidays. Copies are distributed free by campus mail to full-time faculty and staff at a campus office. Orders for bulk issues are accepted during the months of January through May. Available upon request in the AU Student Union, 2nd floor, room 242 (Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.), except when on holiday. The AU Report is distributed free for delivery on the AU campus to: Students, Staff, and Faculty.

The AU Report, a publication of Auburn University, is owned by the Board of Trustees of the Auburn University System.

**Art sale**

The gallery at Telfair Peet Theatre has an unusual display of art that will be ending Jan. 31. The more than 70 pieces of art displayed are created by children, ages 3-15, at the Early Learning Center, under the direction of student mentors from Chi Lovett’s art classes. The children’s creations are on sale for $10 to $15 each, with the proceeds going to the ELC Scholarship fund.

Full schedule of activities set for Black History Month at AU

A U will celebrate Black History Month in February with a variety of events including films, speakers, a talent show and a masquerade ball.

Annually, the organization will also present Jazz and Poetry Night from 7:30 p.m.-10 p.m. Feb. 13 in Foy 207.

Four events will be sponsored or co-sponsored by the Multicultural Center.

The activities begin at 3 p.m. Thursday in Foy 217 with a discussion and viewing of "February One," a documentary examining the 1960 lunch counter sit-ins in Greensboro, N.C., that revitalized the Civil Rights Movement.

Following the film, around 5 p.m., Harold Franklin, the first African American student at AU, will present a program cosponsored by the Black Student Union. An Alabama State University graduate, Franklin enrolled in graduate school at Auburn in 1964; he later completed his graduate studies at the University of Denver. In 2001, AU presented an honorary doctorate to Franklin. A talent show, cosponsored by the Black Student Union, is scheduled for 6 p.m. Monday, Feb. 5, in the Foy Ballroom.

The documentary film “Forgotten Genius” will be broadcast on PBS on Tuesday, Feb. 6. The film about the life and career of chemist Percy Julian, a native of Montgomery, will be shown at the Chemistry Building, the time and place will be announced later. The campus showing is sponsored by the College of Sciences and Mathematics.

Guest speaker Victor Lewis will present “Beyond the Color of Fear: Dismantling Racism” from 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Feb. 20 in Foy 217. An internationally known education trainer and activist, Lewis has conducted keynote speeches, seminars and “train the trainer” programs throughout the United States and abroad.

At 7 p.m. Feb. 22, the Black Student Union will co-sponsor “Comedy Showcase” in the Foy Ballroom. The AU Student Chapter of the NAACP will cosponsor the Unity Masquerade Ball at 7 p.m. Feb. 24 in the Foy Ballroom.

**Professor publishes book on chemical engineering**

Ram B. Gupta, alumni professor in the Department of Chemical Engineering in AU’s Samuel Ginn College of Engineering, recently released his second book, Solubility in Supercritical Carbon Dioxide.

The book is a professional reference text for use in designing supercritical fluid processes in chemical, food, pharmaceutical, nanotechnology and environmental engineering.

The 960-page book, which took six years to complete, is published by CRC Press and is available at www.crcpress.com or www.amazon.com.
Profiles in Excellence

Quest to become better teacher led professor to national leadership role

When he joined the Auburn faculty in 1982, Bill Buskist was a promising young researcher in his branch of psychology. Yet, within two years, his career took a sharp turn that was to have consequences for the Auburn professor, his students and college professors across the United States.

A simple question from an internationally prominent authority in psychology helped Buskist find the missing ingredient in his career plans. The question arose in 1984, while he was working on a special project in the Psychology Department. In that project, undertaken at the request of Department Head Peter Harzem, he was redesigning the department’s introductory course for freshmen and sophomores.

At the time, Introduction to Psychology was taught almost exclusively by graduate students who had little or no formal preparation for teaching at the college level. As he looked for better ways of determining what and how to teach introductory psychology, the young assistant professor found that he enjoyed teaching as much as he enjoyed laboratory research. Buskist now says he felt that he was not smart enough to succeed at both simultaneously and needed to focus on one or the other.

When he sought advice from Harzem, the department head responded with the question: “Whom do you want to care about your work?”

Buskist admits, “Up to that time, I had been covering the material in class, but not going much further. I would be in a hurry to get through class so I could get to the lab; I was basically just going through the motions with my teaching.”

Other than those who were doing more reading on their own, students in his classes were learning just enough to meet course requirements. For many students, that was all they wanted, but, he recalls, they were leaving at the end of the term with no greater appreciation for the role of psychology in everyday life. Buskist soon decided that these students, not other psychologists and researchers, were the ones who needed his help the most.

That realization led to a new, stronger commitment to teaching. Although previously an adequate instructor by most standards, Buskist now approached teaching with the same determination he had earlier devoted to his studies of the psychology of human competition. As he learned more about the craft of teaching, he began applying that knowledge in his classes.

Two decades later, the New York native is frequently cited as one of the best teachers at Auburn, where in 2005 he and Leanne Lamke of Human Sciences were the inaugural recipients of the Emily and Gerald Leischuck Endowed Presidential Award for Excellence in Teaching, AU’s highest award for teaching. Buskist now holds the title of Distinguished Professor in the Teaching of Psychology in the College of Liberal Arts, and he is a Faculty Fellow in AU’s Biggio Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning.

Even the long-ago goal of becoming a national authority in his field has been realized, albeit not in experimental psychology as originally intended, but in the study and practice of teaching. Buskist has authored and co-authored numerous journal articles and several books on the teaching of psychology.

Also, this month he assumes the presidency of the Society for the Teaching of Psychology, a division of the American Psychological Association. He served last year as president-elect of the national society. He is also a founding member of the College of Liberal Arts committee on Promoting Excellence in Teaching and Learning and of EDGE, a research group that has had national impact on the teaching of psychology.

Buskist says his proudest achievements center on the recognition that his graduate students have received for their teaching. In the past six years, three of his students have won national teaching awards.

The veteran professor applies in the classroom what he has learned about teaching. Instead of simply lecturing about psychology, Buskist tries to draw upon his knowledge of the field to make the material relevant to the students. “Now I try to go beyond simply giving them the information; I look for what interests them and provide examples and context for discussion,” he said.

“To reach students, you have to figure out what is important about the idea you are discussing,” he added. “Then you can find examples that help them grasp the concept and see why it is important.”

Once students realize that psychology is intrinsic to daily life, they often become enthused about the material, Buskist said. “Psychology is an easy subject to teach. Students have an inherent interest in their behavior and the behavior of others; they want to know what makes people tick. Once you get them to thinking about that, they want to learn more.”

Quest to become better teacher led professor to national leadership role

The Biggio Book Group, an informal group of faculty and others interested in high-quality instruction, will hold two sessions in February to discuss the book Applying the Science of Learning to University Teaching and Learning.

Open to all faculty, graduate students and academic support staff, the book group will meet in the Biggio Center’s conference room in Draughon Library at 1:30 p.m. Feb. 13 and 5 p.m. Feb. 14. Participants may attend either or both 90-minute sessions.

Part of the New Directions for Teaching and Learning series, this volume is edited by Marilla Svinicki and Diane F. Halpern. Coupons are available at the Biggio Center for a 50 percent discount for copies purchased at the AU Bookstore; send an e-mail to biggio1@auburn.edu, and include your campus address.

For information on the discussion sessions, contact Amy Vaughan at 844-8530. Information on the book is available online at www josseybass.com /WileyCDA.